

contentious and pugnacious, few Erie County Legislators in history have cared more for the communities they represent, and about the actions of government in service to those people than has Al DeBenedetti.

Now, I tell you Mr. Speaker, Al is a unique individual indeed. Al comes from proud and deeply rooted Italian and Polish stock, and his father was a renowned professional wrestler. One thing is certain—it is a good thing for his opponents that Al's weapon of choice was his mind and not his fists, because Al always fought, and fought hard, for the people he represented in Buffalo's Black Rock, Riverside and west side neighborhoods.

Prior to his service in the Erie County Legislature's 6th District, Al was Assistant Deputy Commissioner to the Erie County Board of Elections and also served on the Administrative Staff of former Erie County Executive Dennis Gorski. Upon the election of then-Legislator David Manz to Buffalo City Court in 1991, Al took office as his successor, and has served in this capacity ever since.

Al rose quickly through the Legislature's ranks. In only his third term of office, Al was elected Majority Leader and was appointed Chairman of the Legislature's Finance and Management Committee. In that capacity, Al worked with legislators and with then-County Executive Dennis Gorski to steer a clean and effective financial ship for Erie County.

In 2002, Al was elected Chairman of the Erie County Legislature, a position he held for one year. During his Chairmanship, the Legislature began the process of moving its offices from the Erie County Hall Annex back to its original home in Old County Hall, the historical site where United States President Grover Cleveland once held court as Mayor of Buffalo.

Al DeBenedetti rarely saw an election day without a vigorous fight, but was always successful. I have always chalked that success up to his personality and his unwillingness to give up on a fight. I had a nickname for Al—I always called him "Alley Cat." I think I did this because Al was always a scrapper, and invariably, his fight was an independent one, and was conducted on the behalf of Erie County's taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to you for allowing me an opportunity to commemorate the service of my friend and colleague, Erie County Legislator Al DeBenedetti, on the occasion of his retirement as a member of the Erie County Legislature. Al's service on the Legislature was honorable and unique, and his history as a member of this august body will carry on for many years to come.

**HONORING FRANCIS BONNER OF
HAZLETON, PENNSYLVANIA, ON
THE OCCASION OF HIS 70TH
BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask you and my esteemed colleagues in the House of Representatives to pay tribute to my very good friend Mr. Francis Bonner, of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, on the occasion of his 70th birthday celebration.

Mr. Bonner has enjoyed an exceptional career in public service and in the advancement of the anthracite coal industry. He has been married to Marie (Clatch) Bonner for more than 40 years. They are the parents of Mary Pat Bonner, whose career in Democratic politics was inspired by her father's lifelong dedication to the Democratic party.

Born in Hazleton, Mr. Bonner was a son of Miles and Mary Hannigan Bonner. He graduated from St. Gabriel's High school in Hazleton and Villanova University where he also pursued graduate studies. He also attended Clarion State College Coal Institute, the University of Pittsburgh Coal Gasification Liquefaction and Conversion to Electricity Conference and the Penn State University Coal Combustion Technology Seminar.

From 1954 to 1960, he served as International Representative for District 50, United Mine Workers of America.

He later served as a field investigator for the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.

In the early to mid 1960s, he served as Eastern Regional Administrator for the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. In that position, he conducted investigations and educational functions to insure compliance with legislation guaranteeing equal opportunity in employment, housing, education and public accommodations.

He then worked for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as an administrator for federal equal opportunity executive orders.

From 1971 to 1979, he served as special personal assistant to Pennsylvania Governor Milton Shapp. In that capacity, he was directly responsible for the administration's energy and fuel development programs; industrial development programs; liaison for labor management relations; liaison to the state House and Senate on matters concerning energy and labor relations; disaster control and relief and industrial development.

He later worked for the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission as a fossil fuels coordinator, developing programs to encourage the use of coal in the generation of electric power.

From 1982 to the present, he has been president of Bonner Associates of Pennsylvania, a firm that serves as a consultant on governmental affairs with special emphasis on energy, particularly coal use and development, health care, labor management relations and waste disposal and recovery.

Honored by the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce and the economic development group, CAN-DO, as "Hazletonian of the Year," Mr. Bonner has served his community in numerous ways, including as assistant director of the Villanova Urban Studies Program, Deputy state chairman of the Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee, member of the Hazleton City Planning and Zoning Board of Adjustment, member of the Philadelphia Fellowship Commission, member of the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority, Governor's Energy Council, United States Department of Energy Anthracite Task Force, Governor's Coal Conference, White House ad hoc Anthracite Task Force, chairman and member of the board of directors of St. Joseph's Hospital, Hazleton; chairman of the Anthracite Health and Welfare Fund and member of the Pennsylvania Unemployment Compensation Board of Review.

On a personal level, Fran has been an astute political observer and a trusted advisor to me during my tenure in Congress. I have always valued his insight into the political atmosphere of Northeastern Pennsylvania and I treasure his friendship.

Mr. Chairman, please join me in congratulating Mr. Bonner on this special occasion. His achievements reflect a devotion to his community in northeastern Pennsylvania where he has contributed to enriching the quality of life.

GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

HON. RON LEWIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing today legislation to address longstanding inequities in Medicare's payments for graduate medical education.

More than 600 hospitals across the country, many in my home state of Kentucky, receive less than the national average from Medicare to train and educate physicians. Medicare's formula for paying hospitals that operate teaching programs is based on costs reported in the early 1980s, significantly below current costs and expanded needs. This limits the ability for many hospitals to train a workforce sufficient to care for the growing Medicare population.

In my state, teaching hospitals lose more than 2 million dollars a year as a result of Medicare's dated policy. In neighboring Ohio, Medicare's policy shortchanges hospitals more than \$10 million each year. My bill will increase Medicare's Direct Graduate Medical Education (DGME) payments to hospitals to 100 percent of the national average per resident amount for facilities whose historical costs are less than the national average.

Congress has made incremental improvements to DGME payments throughout the past 6 years. This began in 1999 with the implantation of a 70 percent minimum payment. In 2001, payments were raised to 85 percent of the national average. In the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, Congress again recognized the flaws in Medicare's payments to teaching hospitals by including a provision requiring that any resident positions redistributed to other hospitals be reimbursed at 100 percent of the national average. My bill continues this work by requiring Medicare to at least pay the average cost of operating a training program.

Medicare's Direct Graduate Medical Education payments should be increased to the national average so no hospitals receive less than Medicare's fair share of the costs of operating a medical education program.

**HONORING RETIRING ERIE COUNTY
LEGISLATOR EDWARD J.
KUWIK**

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor a great son of the city of Lackawanna, New